I was able to come upon among the Matacos was this attempt at a poetic song, sung goodness only knows how, by the squaws. However, in spite of its failings it does reveal the use of rime:

Bonica nambonica
Se-le-ctié-nó:
Bonica, bonica;
Nambonica, nambonica.

which means: I like, I do not like you to embrace me:
I like, I like, I do not like, I do not like.

They have no dances; those violent gallopings about in a circle holding hands can hardly be called dancing. They are chaste, however, when they do dance, and if men and women happen to be at a dance together each sex forms its own separate circle, one within the other, but without touching.

In a word, everything pertaining to the imagination, everything coming under the heading of religion, poetry or dance, can be said to be completely lacking among these savages.

[217] Chapter XIII

Social Matters (continued)

But if they have no imagination are they not also heartless and insensitive? It has repeatedly been said and written that the bonds of kinship are not at all close and easily severed among the Indians; and this "fact" has apparently been picked up not from observation but by analogy based on the absence of the family and the existence of concubinage.

I am afraid that this is going too far. We are accustomed to and molded by our Christian tradition, which, by the way, is an exception to the immense majority of other cultural traditions, an exception which is paid for in part by pretense and infidelity, and the barefaced immorality which is prostitution.

It seems to us that if a woman is not joined to a man by all the sacraments of the church, and if she is not his only wife, then there results a shrivelling in all the finer feelings.

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Choroti SK 6

C 581 584 or whom she only wants for a temporary lover. Above all she wants as a husband a man who treats her well and possesses the qualities necessary to support the future family. Since the Choroti to a great extent live by fishing, skill in this art is naturally reckoned among a man's most praiseworthy qualities. Importance is also attached to skill in gardening and hunting. Consequently, when a young man is courting a girl, he tries to gain her favour by presenting her with fish in abundance. I was told that when several men are courting the same girl — which naturally is often the case — the man who brought her the largest quantities of fish had the greatest chance of gaining preference.

C. 581 593 Thus among the Choroti, marriage is from a man's point of view an important matter. When the parents send out their young son to take part in the dances and to find a wife, they follow his undertaking with the keenest interest. Every evening the father shakes his magical rattle gourd (*pelīte*) in order to promote his son's enterprise and »hurry on» the girls on his behalf. When the rattle gourd is used for such practical purposes the ceremony is called *nekeðlitse símă*, which literally means: »to shake the rattle to get (or obtain) something».

C. 585 Apart from these ceremonies in connection with courtship, there are no particular marriage rites, except the necessary drinking-bout which accompanies all family feasts and in which only the men take part. The young couple are without any further ceremony regarded as married, but marriage is not fully complete until a child is born.

M [171] [562] 527 636 584 Among the *Matáco*, marriages are not particularly contracted in connection with the dances, but conditions are the same as among the Choroti in so far as the women play the active part both as concerns incidental amorous relations and marriages proper. The great drinking-feasts during the algaroba season are the occasions when a woman enters into temporary or permanent relation with a man. When the men are intoxicated, the girls avail themselves of the opportunity, seize the youths whom they like by the hands and take them to their houses where they spend the night with them. These liaisons lead in many cases to real marriages.

M 585 789 ●535 When marriage is agreed upon, it is celebrated with the usual ceremonies which have a religious significance. The drum, the most important magical instrument of the Mataco, is beaten the whole night with a view to keeping off evil spirits from the couple. Similarly, a ceremonial dance, called *Nahútsak*, is performed in the evening. It is a ring-dance much like the marriage dance *Avúshe* of the Choroti. The couple being married are seated in the middle of the ring and their friends dance and chant around

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them. The aim of the dance is partly to protect the former against supernatural dangers, an idea generally associated with the Indian ring-dances. But in addition, it seems to have special reference to marriage, for it is supposed in some mysterious way to influence the marriage candidates favourably. On this particular point, however, I did not receive further information from the Indians.

Lastly, we have to consider the marriage customs of the *Tobas*. The Tobas are generally monogamous for the simple reason that it is difficult for an ordinary man to maintain several wives and a large family, but there are exceptions to this rule. Polygamy is, however, allowed by custom, and if a Toba considers himself rich enough and has an opportunity of getting wives, it is of no rare occurrence that he marries two, three, or more women, who generally live in different villages owing to the jealousy they entertain for each other. This kind of polygamy is especially found among the great chiefs. Thus the famous cacique Taycolique has had in all ten wives. One has died, he has divorced five, and at the time of my stay among the Tobas he had four wives. Such great chiefs frequently separate themselves from their wives only for the sake of marrying some younger and prettier woman. The children of a divorced wife have not the same rights as the children of her supplanter, and if the eldest son is born of such a wife he cannot become chief on the death of his father; in this case the eldest son of the new wife will inherit the chieftainship. The father, however, does not break completely with the children of a divorced wife if they are adult, but maintains relations with them, and they sometimes visit their father.

Among the Tobas, as among most Chaco tribes, pre-nuptial chastity is almost unknown, great sexual liberty being allowed both boys and girls before marriage. As soon as a girl is marriageable, that is, has passed her first menstruation, she may choose casual lovers, and generally she does not fail to make use of her freedoom. Although in some parts of the country, the sexual liberty of the Toba girls seems to have degenerated into prostitution, there is no doubt that the social morality of the people has approved of this custom since ancient times. The young men and women meet at the dances, some of which, among the Tobas as among the Choroti, are intimately connected with the sexual life. The girls cannot, however, as among the Choroti, take the initiative in contracting marriage.

When a Toba man has found a girl whom he likes and wants for his

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M 846

»to be a little sick», which means that he has to be cautious with regard to his work and his diet, just like his wife. Any heavy work, hunting, fishing, the touching of iron instruments, is prohibited to the father, since otherwise his delicate son might fall ill and die. Fasting is likewise obligatory for both of them. The Mataco say of both parents: *uenhitātāk, yil vuh. i.e.*, »they do not eat, there are many demons of death» (moving about and threatening especially the child, but also the parents themselves). A light vegetable food, mainly consisting of boiled and mashed maize, is prescribed for both of them.

When the confined woman has been delivered, her ventral parts must be well covered to protect her against evil spirits which might do her harm. In the evening drums are beaten to keep off the same supernatural, malicious powers. If the woman is the wife of a great chief, a special dance is performed which the Mataco call *Katináh* and which takes place at great feasts celebrated by the whole village community. Like all other dances of the Mataco, the *Katináh* is in its character ceremonial or a sort of conjuration by which evil spirits are kept off or made harmless.

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Among the *Tobas*, just as in part among the Mataco, the ceremonies which are performed and the precautions taken are more elaborate when the mother is the wife of a great chief. Even some time before birth takes place the woman, as we have already seen, has to observe certain rules in regard to her diet, abstaining particularly from eating fish. As soon as the woman has been delivered her body must be well covered, for otherwise, I was told, the evil spirits may enter into her and kill both her and her new-born babe. The danger is particularly great at night. Therefore the Indians assemble in great numbers outside the chief's house, chanting the whole night, accompanying themselves with their rattle-gourds and drinking great quantities of algaroba beer. In the day the young men perform the dance *Nomí*. During the first days the woman does not leave the house, and although she is not ill she remains completely inactive. She likewise continues to fast, eating neither fish nor meat and living solely on maize and certain leaves. — The above ceremonies are performed, and the rules of diet are observed, during five days, or until the navel-wound of the child is completely healed.

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Much the same ceremonies are performed when the mother is a woman of ordinary rank, with the exception that the father of the new-born child alone chants to his rattle the first evening after the birth; and the dance *Nomí* does not take place. The happy event is always celebrated by an algaroba drinking-bout. The mother does not stay in bed and

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The aversion to eating fish among the Toba women is met with in connection with mourning customs also. As to the ideas underlying this superstition, they will be considered in a later chapter.

The puberty ceremonies of the Bolivian *Mataco* are much the same as those of the Tobas. The first menstruation (*opetetéih* in the Mataco language) is regarded as a critical event which necessitates certain precautions. As is the case among the Tobas, these precautions are more elaborate when the girl is the daughter of a great chief. In that case she is completely isolated for five days, strictly dieting. Every evening drums are beaten outside her hut to keep off the evil spirits, the *aitták* or *nahút* which are trying to do her harm. As usual, a drinking-feast is arranged for the men.

If the girl is the daughter of an ordinary man she is allowed to go out, but every evening a dance is held in her honour. This is the ring-dance which the Mataco call *Nahútsak* and which like all Mataco dances is purely ceremonial in its character. The girl sits in the middle of the ring, having the face covered with a cloth, while the other women dance and chant around her in order to keep off the *nahút*.

Not only the first menstruation, but similarly the following monthly courses of a woman are regarded by the Mataco as critical in so far as she is then particularly exposed to supernatural dangers. The Mataco woman therefore on these occasions always takes the precaution to restrict her diet, abstaining particularly from eating fish and meat.

There is one more custom which is practised among many Chaco tribes at the time of puberty and therefore may be considered in this connection — the custom of *tattooing*. Tattooing is done by the *Mataco* and the *Choroti* in about the same way, the women being always and the men sometimes tattooed. The operation is carried out by an old woman: the skin is pricked with a cactus thorn or a sharp bone so that the blood flows, whereupon soot mixed with saliva is carefully rubbed into the wounds. Since the operation is of course extremely painful and makes the girl sick for some days, it is performed gradually, during the course of several years, the intention being that it should be completed when the girl is marriageable. Only the face is tattooed. The first marks are done on the forehead when the girl is about six or seven years old. In the course of the following years new marks — small circles, crosses, half-moons, lines — are added, and when the girl has attained the age of twelve to fourteen years and is considered marriageable, practically the whole face is covered with them. Since the wounds rubbed with ashes cause

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Hämák, hämóh, hämák hämóh,
hämák, hamóya, hämák, hamóya,
hämák, hämóh, etc.

Hämák means 'malicious', evil, and *hämóh* 'go away'. The meaning of the whole conjuration thus is: »go away, evil demon!» The phrase, being incessantly repeated in conjunction with the shaking of the rattle and other operations, is supposed to have the effect of forcing the demon to leave the body.

The Mataco medicine-men however generally try to make their conjurations of the demons of sickness more effective through *dancing*. Sometimes the doctor himself interrupts his incantations and other operations and starts to dance round the patient, sometimes other Indian men or women perform a savage dance round the patient while the curer leans over him. The dance which has for its object to conjure a disease-demon is called *Nahútsak* by the Mataco. The very name (drived from *nahút*, evil spirit) indicates the purely ceremonial character of this dance. There are however different forms of the *Nahútsak*. In some cases it is a sort of ring-dance; in other cases the Mataco by this name denote a dance of the same type as the *Nahót dónnaran* of the Tobas, which will presently be described. 755 535

To give the reader an idea of the Mataco dance *Nahútsak* in a case of sickness I may first borrow the following vivid description of a conjuration which the Italian explorer Pelleschi once witnessed in a Mataco village in the Argentine Gran Chaco. »In the midst of the tolderia», he tells us, »in a sort of open square, I saw a circle of black figures lighted up here and there by the flames of the great fire: these were women and men sitting on their heels silently smoking. Within the circle four robust men were running backwards and forwards within a space of about eight yards. Ostrich feathers and little bells were fastened to their ankles, wrists, heads and waists . . In their hands, which were always lifted up in gesticulation, they held small gourds, half-filled with grain, and these, being shaken, added to the din. They rushed about shouting and yelling, panting and sweating; thrusting out their legs, they stamped hard upon the ground, and then raised their voices in desperation, lifting up their arms, with head bowed and body curved. By turns two of them would stop short, and squatting on the ground would shake their heads rapidly from left to right, backwards and forwards, groaning, blowing, and spitting on the back, legs, head and face of two sick persons who had been

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755 535 placed in their midst .... The spectators remained to do honour to the treatment and increase its efficacy, but not without fear that the *ahút*, on quitting the body of the sick man might enter into theirs».[1])

This savage dance was typical of the Indian dances as far as they have the character of magical conjurations. The Indians firmly believe that they can terrify and expel the evil demon who has taken possession of the patient by violent movements and menacing gestures such as those just described. As to the ostrich feathers which the sorcerers had fastened to ankles, wrists, head and waist, some words of explanation may be added. The feather ornaments which the Indians wear in [789] most of their dances and conjurations are not real ornaments but magical charms which eke out the powers emanating from the whole personality of the sorcerer. Like body-paintings, necklaces made of animals' teeth, rattle bells and gourds etc. they effectively help in conjuring the evil spirits.

The following is a conjuration accompanied by dancing which I myself witnessed in a Mataco village in the Bolivian Gran Chaco. Two Indian sorcerers were trying to cure a horse which was evidently badly attacked by an *aittáh* or *nahút*. The cure took place on various successive nights in an open place outside the *tolderia*. One of the sorcerers chanted in the usual way with his closed hand laid on the neck of the sick horse; the other both chanted and danced. Stamping with the feet alternately on the ground to the measure of his chant, he moved some ten steps away from the horse and then back again, repeating these movements several times. In his hand he held the rattle which he shook incessantly as an accompaniment to his dance and chanting. During the dance the man now and then took up a pebble or a small stick from the ground and threw it into the forest, spitting at the same time vigorously in the same direction. On the path where he moved he had laid some live embers. After a while the sorcerer interrupted his dance, stood close to the horse by the side of his colleague, and shaking the rattle heartily over the animal he shouted several times in a loud voice: *yame! yame! yame!*, that is to say, »go out, go out, go out!» These were the only words uttered during the whole conjuration. During his chanting the 755 533 sorcerers only pronounced refrains such *hõ, hõ, hõ, a, a, a*, and so forth. The tune which the dancer again and again repeated and accompanied with his rattle was the following:

[1]) Pelleschi, *Otto mesi nel Gran Ciacco*, p. 140.

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grew faster and faster, and the chanting accompanying them louder and louder. Soon he seized his magical instrument, the bell rattle called *heligday*, and shook it at first slowly and gradually faster, keeping time with his steps. When the dance reached its culmination, the feet of the dancer moved with intense rapidity, the chanting developed into an inarticulate yelling, and the man seemed to be in a real state of ecstasy. The other men also began to take part in the dance, accelerating their movements as well as their chanting gradually like the principal dancer, and accompanying themselves with their rattles. In this way the noisy performance was continued for several hours. Its object, as the Indians told me, was to promote the ripening of the chañar fruit. The dance seemed to have particular reference to the fruits already gathered, since the effect of all similar Indian dances usually follows on the principle of *pars pro toto*. The Indians evidently believe that the fast movements of the dancer in connection with the chanting and rattling are able to exert a mysterious influence upon the spirit animating the fruit, and the influence is not limited to the fruits gathered at the moment, but according to magical principles is believed to be extended to all plants of the species.

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Similarly the *Mataco* try to promote the processes of nature by dancing. Typical of this was a dance which Mataco and Choroti Indians once arranged in common at the sugar factories in northern Argentine, where they were employed as labourers to cut the cane. The dance was a kind of *Nahûtsak* the object of which was to hurry on the ripening of the sugar plant. The Bolivian Mataco, some of which cultivate the sugar cane, are known to perform this magic dance in their own land too. A bundle of sugar canes, tied together, was held by two Indians in an erect position on the ground. Round these men the other Indians formed a circle. The women joined in, forming a larger circle behind the men. All started to dance, moving round the canes, stamping alternately with their feet on the ground and chanting with a loud voice, keeping time with their steps.

This magical dance to promote the growth of the sugar cane is obviously based on the same principle as the Toba dance just mentioned: the few canes round which the Mataco Indians performed their dance represented the whole field of sugar cane. The idea evidently underlying the rite was that after these specimens of the plant had been properly prepared — *i. e.* the indwelling spirit influenced in the desired direction — the rest of the canes in the fields were likewise favourably influenced.

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Choroti SK6

I have so far only spoken of the dances and other rites which take place at the preparation of the sacred drinks. During the algaroba season, festivals are held almost continuously, and these festivals are chiefly celebrated with drinking-bouts and dancing. Those of the Chaco Indians who have been in contact with the whites and seen the great festival with which, in Argentine and Boliva, they celebrate their carnival in February say that the algaroba season is their own carnival time and that they, too, have their carnival dances. The dances which among the Choroti take place at that time have partly been described before in connection with the customs practised by these Indians at courtship and marriage. In addition to the customary courtship dance *Avúshe*, the great festival, which is called *lākinene*, is celebrated with two more dances, those called *Ahlénta* and *Jóhlōki*. *Jóhlōki* is the name by which the Choroti call the Tobas, a fact that seems to indicate that the Choroti have borrowed the dance from their neighbours. The Tobas themselves call the dance *Nahotti*. It is a ring-dance; the dancing men are arranged in a circle and have their arms round each other's waists, moving round to the right or to the left to the rhythm of a chant. The *Ahlénta* again is identical with the Toba dance *Nomi*. Nevertheless, the Choroti seem to have borrowed it from their southern neighbours, the Ashluslay Indians on the lower Pilcomayo, a fact that may be inferred from the name; for just as *Jóhlōki* means »the Toba dance«, so *Ahlénta* means »the Ashluslay dance« (Choroti *Ahle* = Ashluslay). I would add in this connection that the dances of the Chaco tribes are, in the main, common to all the tribes; there are certain dances which occur among different tribes under different names.

The chants sung at the dances are rather monotonous and are composed of a series of words which apparently have no meaning; for instance in the *Jóhlōki*:

Hā-e-sa-alia,
Hiáh-hia-ália,
He-éh-hia-ália, hia-ália,
Hi-áh,
Hā-he-éh, hā-he-éh,
Hā-se-éh, hā-se-éh, hā-se-éh, etc.

Only the younger unmarried men perform these dances, the older ones being constantly engaged in drinking algaroba beer (*atās*). Unmarried girls are allowed to be present, but as we have seen they do not as a rule

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A peculiarity of the *Nomí* is that it is the only Toba dance which takes place in the day-time; in fact, it is *always* performed during the day, just as other dances are always performed at night. Of the reason of this I am not quite sure, but it is probably to be sought in the particular character of the dance. Most Indian dances are in their nature conjurations of evil spirits, and since these spirits move about especially at night, it is conceivable that the dances are, as a rule, night ceremonies. The dance *Nomí* again, chiefly has for its object the promotion of fertility and the ripening of the algaroba fruit and therefore takes place in the day, just as the Choroti dances, in so far as they have the same object, often take place in the day. It is true that the *Nomí* is also intended to conjure the ghosts of the dead, but these differ from other spirits precisely in that they are generally believed to visit their living relatives in the day-time, when the drinking-feasts are celebrated.

The Mataco also have their festival dance, which in their language is called *Nakătin* or *Katinák*. It corresponds exactly to the Toba dance *Nomi*, and is performed during the algaroba season with the same object, namely, to secure an abundant harvest and to keep off the spirits of the dead, called *kusitah* by the Mataco.

Whether the Mataco have been influenced in this festival dance by their neighbours the Tobas, with whom they have considerable intercourse, I cannot say, but the idea that the dead like to visit the living at the time of the harvest and at the great drinking-feasts, is certainly familiar to many South American tribes. Thus the *Avas* and the *Chané*, who now live on the western border of the Chaco, but came originally to these regions from the north and cannot be reckoned among the Chaco tribes proper, especially practise dancing at their drinking-feasts. Since on this particular point there is an interesting analogy between the customs of the Avas and those of the Chaco tribes, I shall mention what I know about the drinking-feasts of the Avas and the Chané. Their sacred drink is maize beer, called *cangüi* in the Guarani language, which exactly corresponds to the sacred beers brewed from the algaroba and some other fruits in the Chaco. The *cangüi* festivals of the Avas as well as the dance performed in connection with them have been described by the Catholic missionaries, but none of them seems to have realized the religious significance of these ceremonies. The majority of these Indians are now Christians in name and strongly influenced by Christian civilization, having consequently dropped or greatly modified many of their ancient customs. I myself have only witnessed their

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000 ance. The older Indians still knew that the object of the dance at which this dress was worn was to conjure the spirits of the dead, the *añas*, who were believed to come in great numbers to the annual drinking-feasts with the intention of taking part in these joyful entertainments. But the ostrich dress was not the only thing worn on these occasions. Masks were also worn and rattles of hard shells were tied round the legs. The masks and the rattles, together with the ostrich dress and the *yandúa*, formed a real magical apparatus intended to drive off and conjure the unwelcome guests. We know that masks are especially worn by the Indians at death-feasts and that they are, or at least originally have been, purely magical things comparable to drums, rattles, etc., with which supernatural beings are influenced. Even in our days the Avas and Chané use masks at the carnival of the whites in connection with the dance performed on that occasion. They are rudely carved out of a soft kind of wood into the likeness of a human face and are afterwards, according to a common Indian custom, thrown away or destroyed. The mask, which has been tabooed or infected because of its contact with the dangerous spirits, can no longer be used.

The participation of the half-civilised Indians, with their native religious ceremonies, in the carnival of the whites, is an interesting phenomenon. It shows us the amalgamation of a Christian and a purely heathen festival, an amalgamation which of course is psychologically possible only under the assumption that there is an intrinsic connection between them.

226 535 As to the magical dances of the Chaco Indians, I may mention that the Mataco and the Choroti have a dance, the particular object of which is to secure good luck in fishing. The Mataco call this ceremonial dance *Vúokoi*, the Choroti again *Siyúhs*. *Siyúhs* is the name of the kind of fish called *bocachico* in Spanish, the most common fish in the Pilcomayo river. Fishing is the main livelihood of the tribes who have settled on the banks of the river, and the fishing season proper begins at the end of May or the beginning of June, when the dry season in the strict sense begins and the water in the river is low. I have not seen this dance performed, I have only been told about it by the Indians. It is a sort of ring-dance, the Indians making movements in quick time round a live fish placed on the ground, while an Indian standing outside the circle tries to catch the fish. Immediately after the dance is finished the Indians run down to the river, and, thanks to the dance, will have good luck. The dance is believed to have the power of making the fish

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assemble in great quantities in a limited area, so that the fishing men will be able to catch them easily with their nets.

In this magical dance we easily recognize the same principle as for instance in the Choroti dance *Aviúshe*, when the young men try to »hurry on» the girls by dancing and chanting around them. In the dance *Siyúhs*, the live fish, which is the direct object of the ceremony, evidently represents the rest of the fish in the river, which consequently, according to the principles of homoeopathic magic, is favourably influenced.

A few general words may be added as to dancing and chanting as magical rites. The Chaco Indians ascribe great efficacy to the singing or chanting which accompanies nearly all their magical and religious ceremonies. We have also seen that in this kind of conjuration as a rule no words are uttered; the »power» lies in the voice itself, being an emanation of the general magical power which, according to Indian belief, is inherent in the human body itself. It is exactly the same with the rhythmical movements of the body carried out in dancing, by which a part of the energy latent in the organism, so to speak, is released into actuality. Combined with the chanting and with the powerful sounds of drums and rattles, they are believed to act irresistibly upon supernatural beings.

But there is one more idea connected with dancing. One of the leading principles in the Indian conjurations is the principle of *imitation*. By imitating a person or a supernatural being in his movements, voice, or external appearance the magician believes that he can get hold of his soul or essence and thus be able to control him completely. Now, as a matter of fact, the Chaco Indians believe that *the evil spirits themselves dance* when at night they approach the villages in order to visit their inhabitants with sickness and misfortune. This idea is rightly expressed by Pelleschi with special reference to the Argentine Mataco, when he says of the *ahút* among other things: »These spirits ... fly with the wind, following it and producing the same sounds as the storm; they dance in a ring round the tolderías (villages) or round the toldos (huts) of the persons whom they want to harm.[1]) This statement applies to all Chaco Indian beliefs. Since the natives fancy that dancing is the favourite way in which the spirits move, it is in accordance with their magical ideas that they should try to keep them back and counteract their evil influences by performing the same sort of movements, and in general by imitating their manners as faithfully as possible.

[1]) Pelleschi, *Los indios Matacos y su lengua*, p. 94.

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Choroti SK6

M C 764 M [535]

chant the whole night, beating drums and shaking rattles, while the women from time to time utter their peculiar dirge. Similarly among the Tobas drums and rattles are at work for several nights after the death takes place. Among the Mataco dancing forms part of the death-feast, the ceremonial dance *Katináh* being performed every night for a long time. The men taking part in this ceremony have their face blackened with charcoal as a sign of sorrow, but in reality as a protection against the death-demon. As a rule the Indians would not admit that they feared the departed soul. On the contrary, the Mataco told me that when the medicine-man beats his drum in the evening, he at the same time says to the departed soul in an insinuating voice: »May you stay here, may you not leave us!» The Choroti again, in speaking of the deceased use the stereotyped phrase: *náhsah* (= *eiz sáhe*), *i. e.* »he is good», although at the same time their whole behaviour clearly shows that they stand in fear of him.

M 764 273

The drinking of some intoxicating liquor also forms an important part of a death-feast, and it is considered necessary that the men taking part in the drinking-bout should get more or less intoxicated. The strong algaroba beer is most appreciated, but at those times of the year when there is no algaroba the Indians have to be content with beer brewed of tusca or chañar. Only in exceptional cases do the Chaco Indians drink maize beer at their feasts. The drinking of intoxicating liquors on these occasions has a ceremonial character and is believed to fill those taking part in it with power of resistance against the disease and death-demon.

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The way in which the Tobas purify the village after a death is typical of the Chaco Indians. Among all Pilcomayo tribes purification is chiefly carried out by means of fire brands which are waved about in all directions in the evening of the day on which the death takes place. Similarly, the destruction of the property of the deceased, the burning of his clothes and his other belongings, the destruction of the gourds from which he has eaten and drunk and, in general, of all things with which he has been in contact, are customary among the Choroti, the Mataco, and the Ashluslay. The taboo of death is attached to them and they can no longer be used. The whole house of course particularly falls under the death taboo and is therefore always burned. But the Mataco and the Choroti are generally not content with burning the hut where the deceased lived and where he died, but as a rule destroy the whole village, considering it polluted to such extent by the contagion of death that the

cine-man why he has come. He answers, »I came to have a talk, to call on you and become your friend.» They become friends.

V. Origin of the Rio Bermejo

The Rio Bermejo is very deep for it was dug by a big *tatu careta* (giant armadillo) who wanted to go to the source of the river.

VI. The New Moon

When there is a new moon, the Indians dance and beat on their drums (*pimpim*). The man who plays a drum wears a belt with hanging pendants of metal, hoofs and so on. They put water into the drum so that the hide will not get dry.

VII. Menstruation

It is the moon who sleeps first with the girls and that is why they menstruate. When a young girl is menstruating for the first time, she must begin working and doing all she will have to do later on. If she does not keep active during this period, then she will be lazy all her life. She must be in semi-seclusion for five days, only going out with her father's permission. She may not marry or have sexual intercourse until after her first menstruation. When a woman is menstruating, she must not go to the bush where she could easily become frightened and die.

VIII. Eclipses

An eclipse of the sun or moon foretells disease. When either the sun or moon becomes angry with men it covers itself. To have it uncover it is necessary to beat drums, shout, sing and to make all kinds of noise. When the sun is covered one may expect smallpox.

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careta (big armadillo) or the skin of an alligator in the house. The disease will think that the animals are there and will not go into the house.

a) *The Treatment of Disease*

I attended a ceremony for the treatment of disease. The ceremony took place in front of some huts, the space was closed in by awnings and cloth. Inside the enclosure were the patient, the medicine-man and a certain number of individuals who assisted the latter. The patient, an old man, was sitting in the center of the space, his body carefully covered with cloth. The medicine-man stood near him and while murmuring incantations blew on the patient's body through his half clenched hand, beginning with his back, then the shoulders, the face and so on. In the meantime four or five men were dancing without interruption and made all the noise they could with a belt of big bells. They had tied to their feet anklets of deer hoofs and wore around their waists belts of ostrich feathers and on their heads were diadems. One of them held in his hand a bunch of ostrich feathers.

Their dance consisted of a cadenced and half-jumping walk with slightly bent knees. Some dancers went forward or backward while others stayed in the same spot. During the ceremony the medicine-man received the help of another old man who was also squatting at the patient's side. He began muttering incantations and blowing on the sick man as hard as he could. After one hour of this utterly exhausting exercise, the medicine-man went to a pot full of rice which was carefully concealed by a sheet near the patient. He crouched under the sheet and recited in a supplicative voice a long incantation over the food. Afterwards he blew on the rice with all his strength. He then offered goodly portions of it to all who had taken part in the ceremony. Then the medicine-man went to two *caraguatá* bags full of dresses. He covered them with a cloth under which he crouched. He

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pronounced the same incantation, blew on the dresses which were unfolded and taken away. On the heap of dresses had been placed a gun wrapped in a red belt richly inlaid with shells. One of the dancers seized the gun and slinging it over his shoulder executed a dance bearing a certain likeness to the one he had done before. The dancers were relatives of the sick man, probably his sons.

b) *Treatment of Disease*

A rich woman who was seriously ill was cured by five renowned medicine men. A big open space of about fifteen feet square was cleared not far from her house. Wooden posts were erected and a sort of tent set up. One of the posts, about 20 feet high, was decorated with two large pieces of cloth and an old Argentine flag. Around the tent were placed the objects required by the disease, those which are supposed to please him, a mosquito net, a weaving loom, an old suitcase, pieces of gaudily colored cloth, a saddle, a soldier's coat, a lamp, a lance or a gun. A little further away fires were burning where the disease's food was being prepared and a pail of water was being heated for the dancers. The sick woman was seated in the middle of the tent on a pile of hay and old rags. She had put on her best dress and was covered with ritual ornaments. The five shamans, who were old men, were equally adorned with feather belts, rattles, tropical helmets and other precious objects. The lower part of their faces was painted black.

There were also some twenty dancers wearing feathers, red belts adorned with shells, rattles, caps, red pieces of cloth, whistles and old broken watches, while perhaps ten old women ran about holding rags in their hands and one even held an umbrella. Everybody, including the sick person, danced and sang, at times the medicine-men and the sick woman stopped, they blew on her and the dancing was resumed. After a while the chief medicine-man whistled on

his bone flute and the dance stopped abruptly. The sick woman danced alone, lifting slowly one foot and then the other two or three inches above the ground, without moving from one spot. In the meantime two medicine-men shook their rattles. A man clapped his hands laughing, and others shook their rattle gourds. It lasted for about ten minutes, then the medicine-men joined the dance, but for a short time only. After a pause, two of them approached the sick woman and started undressing her. In the meantime another medicine-man was shaking his rattle all along her body, beginning with the head. All the ornaments were slowly removed, the assistants struck the ground at the place where these ornaments fell, and then picked them up and ran to throw them away. They shook them several times, then put them carefully in order. The sick woman sat up in the middle of her tent and was given a drink. The ceremony was interrupted, then resumed again. The entire ceremony lasted from the 20th to the 24th of March, every day from 8 to 11 o'clock and in the evening from 8 to 10 o'clock. Shots were fired every day in order to drive away the disease.

On the 26th of March another woman, who manifested the same symptoms as the first, was cured in the following way: The place already described was used, but the flag was removed and replaced with a large piece of red cloth with blue flowers and on top of the staff there was tied a large bunch of ostrich feathers. The staff itself was decorated with ritual belts, woolen belts trimmed with snail shell beads. On the cross-bars, which separated the tent from the village, offerings of the same type as for the preceding ceremony were placed. During the cure, the sick woman remained sitting the whole time on a pile of hay in the center of the tent, surrounded by four medicine-men and about ten dancers, and further away were six or seven women. All were adorned with ritual belts and bells and all were dancing and singing. A passage had been opened between the cross-bars which was meant as an exit for the disease. If someone

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stood in the entrance he did not prevent the disease from escaping but he did expose himself to contracting it.

At a signal from the chief medicine-men, the dancing was interrupted. Two men seized a white and red striped poncho by its extremities and began to dance, making side jumps legs parted. They went to the sick person and put the poncho on her, then they ran with it to the exit and shook it there. They repeated this several times, then they wrapped the woman from head to foot with the poncho and a medicine-man started rubbing her through the cloth, while everybody sang without dancing. After a while the twisted poncho was removed, taken to the exit and thrown away. Then the dance began again. An assistant sprinkled water on the ground and the chief medicine-man stopped the dance once more. He set down near the sick woman, covering himself entirely with a large black blanket and started speaking to the disease. In the meantine, the man who was moistening the ground brought a pail of water and with the assistance of one of the medicine-men he washed the face, head and body of the patient, then she was placed with her feet toward the exit. During the course of the dance, the assistant moistened the shoulders of the male dancers, while an old man painted the women's faces, making two red dots on their cheeks and a stripe along the nose. During this dance a medicine-man blew on the sick woman and another covered her face with a piece of red cloth. After a while the woman lay down and the dance went on, the paricipants assuming threatening expressions, then suddenly all looked very satisfied. The ceremony was interrupted, then after an hour's time it was resumed.

On the following day another woman was taken sick — but not such a rich one — and another treatment of a more modest character was undertaken. In front of the woman's house a tent was stretched and she was placed in the tent. The offerings consisted only of some pieces of cloth and a few bags. When I arrived the chief medicine-man was speak-

755 ing to the disease while an old woman, who was a magician, sang and blew on the patient. The others were talking among themselves without paying any attention to what was happening. After a pause, during which everybody drank some of the wine required by the disease, a singing man started to run around the patient, his body bent forward and his arms dangling. The chief medicine-man spoke once more with disease while the medicine-woman continued blowing on the patient and another medicine-man placed around the head of the patient front pages of illustrated papers and popular novels. The man who was running stopped and the chief medicine-man started talking with the others. Everybody sat down and drank some water, then two women began to walk rapidly around the others while they sang. One of them stopped and after a short while the other [535] one stopped too. Then all who were present started dancing. The dance was interrupted only by the coughing of the patient who seemed to be growing weaker and weaker. She actually died during the ceremony. Immediately after her [764] death the dance stopped. The old women ran about singing and shaking their rattles. Two men laid the dead woman on her right side and folded her legs and arms. They wrapped her in the pieces of cloth on which she had been lying and she was taken to her home. The medicine-men undressed quietly while the women of the family uttered lamentations.

c) *General Expulsion of Disease*

755 292 [534] The ceremony for general expulsion of disease took place early in the morning in the open air, far from all houses. It was performed by all the medicine-men of the village standing in a row. All were holding in their hands a rattle-gourd and a bone whistle. Some were provided with strips of cloth to which were attached rattles; the strips were worn across the chest or hung at the elbow. Others wore ceremonial shirts, some wore shirts made of *caraguatá* fiber and one

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on the sick woman. Then, as she seemed to have quited down, they started smoking and talking together. The possessed woman even accepted a cigarette. 755

Observations made by natives during the performance: The adornments are worn by the patient on behalf of the spirit who is fond of the colors. The songs and the noise of the bells are also intended to please the spirit who, charmed by the ornaments and the noise, gets quieter and leaves the patient. 755 776

During this treatment another group of about eight Indians were participating in a similar ceremony. They were dancing around a kind of improvised altar which consisted of a stick surrounded by four smaller ones forming a cross. The central stick was topped by palm leaves, the ends of which were wrapped in paper strips painted red. The four other sticks bore palm leaves painted red with the ends cut off. These sticks were inserted into wooden stands painted alternately red and black and connected in pairs by transverse rods. The whole structure was resting on some rags. A rolled poncho belonging to the medicine-man had been laid near the central stick. The ground for the ceremony had been carefully swept. According to my informant the central stick contained the injurious element which had caused the disease. That stick was supposed to be loaded with bad influences and I was warned not to touch it. 755 778

The dancers wore different costumes. Two of them had belts of ostrich feathers, and feather wreaths on their heads. In addition they wore bells and rattles on their breasts, around their loins and their ankles. Around their necks they wore necklaces of sea shells and in one hand they held a bunch of ostrich feathers. The other dancers wore their ordinary clothes with the exception of their headbands and the bells and feathers they wore on their ankles. 755 535 301

When I arrived they were dancing in a circle around the altar, from right to left, looking straight ahead. Their dance step might be defined as a jerky jog-trot. They accompanied 755 535

They accompanied
755 themselves with a very deep song, a sort of *heh, heh*, repeated
535 rhythmically but on different notes. When the dancers
[533] got tired they left the file without ceasing to sing, and after they had rested for a while they resumed their places.

The second part consisted of dancing couples. The dancers faced each other in twos and holding each other by the arm made side jumps, holding their legs parallel but slightly apart. Always moving from right to left they went several times round the altar, from time to time spinning themselves about. When they stopped to catch their breath one of them uttered a loud cry and started to dance alone, that is to say, making side jumps with parted and stiff legs, always facing the altar, although he whirled now and then. After spinning around twice he was joined by the others. They stopped dancing, sat down and one of them took off his ornaments. Another dancer covered himself entirely with a poncho and uttered his ë ë ë, always in the same tone. The medicine-man went to get the poncho he had left near the altar, he put it on the child and started to sing and to blow on the little patient. The dancer who had covered himself with the poncho kept silent, but remained under his cover. When the ceremony was over he began to sing.

a) *Treatment of a Man Possessed by a Spirit*

755 A man was caught by a spirit at about 9 P. M. He was decorated with red belts and placed in the center of the ceremonial ground. He was given two bells and in front of him were stuck three sticks, one of which about 2 yards long was totally covered with a rather dark cloth, the other two between 2½ and 3 feet high had rags and bunches of ostrich feathers fastened to their tops. The two medicine-men, wearing only belts of ostrich feathers and holding in their hands metal rattles, were standing by the side of the patient. A little further away were two assistants (probably

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relatives of the patient) and three dancers. All wore rattles. 755

The medicine-men sang and blew on the patient, who shook the bells, while the dancers and the assistants stamped in one place and let their rattles jingle. The dancers then started to run from left to right and thus made a complete circle. For the second turn, when they arrived at the height of the sticks, they reversed and ran around in the opposite direction, then reversed again and so on. While the assistants were stamping their feet, singing and shaking their rattles, the medicine-men went on singing and blowing. The patient had not moved during the dance. After they had run around ten times, the dancers went to rest, smoke and talk with the assistants, but the medicine-men still blew and shook their rattles. The patient was still motionless. After a quarter of an hour the dance was resumed, this time to the accompaniment of the patient's bells and rattles which all present were shaking. All seemed to be rather happy. The ceremony was then over and they sat down to smoke. The sticks were removed and the ornaments taken off, first those of the medicine-men, then the assistants and dancers, and finally those of the patient. The patient returned quietly to his hut. 755 535

XV. Sexual Life

Before marriage nothing prevents young people from having a free sexual life. The girls paint their faces red if they have had sexual intercourse the preceding night. 836 302

In love affairs before marriage it is always the women who take the initiative. 836

If a man has sexual intercourse with a menstruating woman his loins and head will ache. As for the woman, she is in no danger. 833 841

You must not sleep with a woman whose child has not yet cut any teeth for the woman will lose her mind and as the child cannot eat alone he will die. 834 828

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with a charata (bird, *Ortalis canicollis*) bone that they might rise early, and finally with an owl's bone in order to see and fight in the dark.

Matako always attack at daybreak. They kill only men, young or old, burn the village, and take away as captives the women and children. When my informant was a child his people fought against the Pilaga on the Pilcomayo where they had gone fishing. The last encounter between the Toba and the Matako took place four years ago (1929) near Pozo del Tigre. In consequence of that conflict, the Matako made prisoner a Toba woman, but later on they surrendered her to her people for a payment.

Toba children taken captive by the Matako were raised like Matako children. Later they married women of the tribe and had in general the same rights as the other members of the group.

Not so long ago the Matako practiced scalping. A man who took a scalp gave it to his wife who danced to express her joy at her husband's killing an enemy.

XVIII. Dances

The dances begin at sunset and are continued until one or two o'clock in the morning. These are only for unmarried people and the dancers are always surrounded by the children of the village; they enjoy these affairs very much. Children normally do not take part in the dances, but are sometimes admitted among the dancers in order that they may learn the songs and dances.

1. All participants form a circle with their faces toward the center, the right hand on the shoulder of the person to the right and the left hand on the waist of the person to the left. One of the dancers starts singing very slowly and everybody stamps rhythmically, the right foot marking the time. After a few notes all the dancers begin to sing. The rhythm of the song and the movement of the dancers become livelier and livelier and gradually the stamping develops

533 into a walk, the right foot moving first and the left one being
535 slowly brought up to it. The direction of the walk is always from left to right. The rhythm of the song becomes more and more accelerated, transforming itself into a rather rapid running, always in the same direction, the right foot stamping heavily on the ground thus marking the time. After fifteen minutes more or less, the dancers stop at a signal given by their leader, then begin again.

535 2. The dancers stand in two equal lines facing each other with their arms resting on their neighbor's shoulders. Between the two files the leader stands alone. When he gives a signal both files begin moving and singing. One of the files goes toward the other while the latter withdraws at a slow trot. In the meantime the leader runs between the files and along them, going more quickly than the dancers. Each time he runs around twice he points out a dancer in one of the files, who then moves rapidly toward the opposite file, choses a dancer and draws him out. Gradually the total number of dancers diminishes. When there are only three left, the leader nods to one of the remaining three, telling him to choose a dancer in the opposite file, then the game goes on in the opposite direction.

3. The dancers form two or more files, standing one behind the other, holding each other by the waist, singing and shouting. They start running, each file trying to dislodge the other line and throw down the dancers, being careful themselves not to be separated. In order to defend themselves the files run beside each other and when they think the time has come they try to cut the others off and throw disorder into the opposite side.

4. This dance begins like the first one, the difference being that the dancers' hands rest on the shoulders and not on the hips. Once the circle has started running it is broken up suddenly at one point and divided into several files that first stamp and then start running, forming a spiral which grows tighter and tighter. When they stand so close together

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that all movement is impossible except to stamp, the spiral begins to unfold itself, first very slowly, then more and more quickly. The dancers are sometimes many. The circle divides into two files which develop simultaneously on both sides of the enclosure.

5. The young men form a file from the center of the dance enclosure to the outer border. Each dancer puts his hand on the shoulder of one neighbor and his other hand on the hip of his other neighbor. The file starts slowly to move; the man in the center whirls himself in a circle and the others follow the movement. The movement is faster toward the outer ends of the file and is accompanied by songs. Sometimes the singing stops but the movement goes on, then the singing starts again.

From time to time the dance is interrupted by a young man following a girl. After they have been running through the dancing place of the village they ordinarily sleep together and on the following day appear with their faces painted red.

According to my informant the dancing songs have no meaning, being mere rhythmic utterances.

XIX. Mourning Rites

A man is buried in the bush in a grave about six feet deep immediately after dying. The dead are buried reclining on their right sides with their faces toward their fields. If they were placed in any other position they could not find the way to their houses and they would become lost. No food is given to the dead except a calabash half filled with water. The soul drinks this water to quench his thirst during his journey to the underworld. All the personal belongings of the deceased are burned and their souls come out to join the soul of their owner. His animals are not killed, but when they die their souls join that of their master.

Immediately after death all grown up members of the deceased, even very remote relatives, begin to weep, ac-

764 companying themselves on rattles and drums. These laments last for about one hour after death, then begin again when the corpse is carried away to be buried and finally when they come back from the burial. But on the following day only very near relatives parents, grandparents, aunts or uncles, go on weeping. Those who were already mourning for someone else weep louder than the others because they mourn for two.

765 The laments take place at sunrise and at sunset as well as in the middle of the afternoon. During the first days of mourning the near relatives of the deceased go to his home to mourn. There they run and dance, going continually [535] from one place to another and shaking their rattles with both hands. They accompany the dance with lamentations. With the exception of the wife of the deceased, women always mourn in this way, shaking rattles, dancing and lamentations. Mourning women must not appear bareheaded or with a naked face for they ought not to be seen. People [533] sing and play on rattles during the mourning period in order that the dead person may readily be forgotten. The laments which last two or three hours every day are supposed to help the living forget the dead. After six months, more or less, they weep only at dawn and even then very rarely. [302] The relatives of the dead person must cut off their hair in order not to displease the dead who would attack their heads and make them bald. The wife, at the death of her husband, observes mourning for two years. She shuts herself up in a special little hut often adjoining the hut of her married son, or daughter if she has no son.

768 The house of the deceased is pulled down and a new one built about 10 yards away. If this were not done the dead man would come back within fourteen days after death, attracted by memories of his previous life. The materials of the old house are used in the construction of the new one.

A widow may leave her home to satisfy her wants only at night. If she goes out during the day the dead man gets

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Mataco Marriage

By Niels Fock

This paper was written on a field trip to the Mataco, carried out under the auspices of the Fundación Williams, Argentina with support from the Danish State Research Foundation. I wish to express my hearty thanks to these institutions, and particular thanks to my professor, Dr. Kaj Birket-Smith, who has supported the expedition both scientifically and morally.

The Mataco Indians inhabit the western areas of the Argentine Chaco between the Rio Pilcomayo and the Rio Bermejo. They have for centuries been in contact with civilisation, but as a frontier tribe they seem to have built up a special traditionalism as a protective bulwark. Particularly the north-eastern Mataco at the central Pilcomayo have preserved their ancient traditions to this day, and the occupational system is still stamped by the collecting by women and the fishing of the men. The customs in connexion with marriage have to a large extent been retained unaffected to the present day, evincing many primitive features as, for example, the lack of any form of wedding ceremony. The contraction of marriage extends over a period dating from the girl's initiation until her first confinement.

The Mataco regard the initiation of girls as an introduction to marriage. This initiation consists in the girl's seclusion—or better—segregation from everyone apart from her mother. It comes as a prolongation of her first menstruation, and the long isolation is spent in continual work making *caragsaid* cord. It is considered very important that this work should be performed rapidly and well in order that an impression can be formed of the girl's ability as regards her main occupation in the future. As a rule the end of seclusion is marked by an *aloja* festival during which the girl looks around for a man. That same night she is able to take him with her to her home and allow him to sleep with her.

The girl being initiated is then called *mutshe;* sexually and economically she is now ready for marriage. Normally several years will pass during which the girl may well search for a husband, but the actual result of her efforts is a series of sexual relations that seldom endure beyond a few days. It is nearly always the girl who takes the initiative for these short term adventures. At the village dancing-place where every evening the young men dance in chains or rings, the girls also

584 make their appearance, and having studied the chosen cavalier join him in the
836 dance, holding him by the shoulder or around his body (Fig. 2). Either during or
[535] immediately after the dance the girl draws away her elected partner, taking him as a rule to the house of her parents.

302 The introduction to a pre-marital sexual relation can naturally take place in
832 some other manner. It often happens that a young man desiring a sweetheart paints a particular pattern on his face, a large red oval or circle containing small white spots on both cheeks. Everybody then knows that he is seeking a girl, and he is called *kyatithli*. The day after, perhaps even the same day, a girl will be seen painted with the same pattern. She is called *tamaklaxit*, because by her painting she indicates that she accepts him. This method also shows that it is the girl who
836 makes the choice. He makes himself available both at the nightly dance and by painting himself, and she is free to accept him or to refrain from so doing. I was
[558] assured many times that a young man so selected has no chance of excusing him-
[548] self; he would lose face if he attempted to do so, and would call down upon him-
[182] self the anger of the girl's family. A young man who is not chosen by a girl despite his wish can in the meantime console himself with one of the village prostitutes, who appear to have precisely this function, as extra-marital infidelity with a prostitute is regarded as valid unfaithfulness.

301 It has already been mentioned that young men and women seeking love can
832 often be recognized by the painting of their faces and by a general urge to adorn themselves. Also restricted to this period are a special broad armlet made of black and white beads, and—particularly for the girls—an ordinary white string of beads from which depend red woollen cords with bead tassels that hang down the neck (Fig. 1). Young men who seek or have just found a sweetheart, traditionally
832 evince great musicality, and are practically the only ones who play the Jew's harp
[533] and a primitive musical bow. The music gives expression to longing and un-
[534] requited love. Young couples have a special form of caress, pressing the cheek
[304] of their partners with the points of their nails. This leaves behind small wounds visible for a week or more, and is proof of great infatuation.

836 When a girl has found a sweetheart no secret is made of the fact; at all events all the young people in the village will be aware of the various short-lived unions that have begun. But when she brings her lover home at night to her parents' house they nevertheless evince a form of discretion. The parents pretend to be asleep whilst the young ones creep in; but the father, as though by chance, may cause the fire to blaze up so that he can see whom the girl has chosen. He then lies
583 down to rest. It is often said of a young couple who in this way commence inti-
836 mate relations that "they have begun to be married". This means that they have commenced a kind of trial marriage the result of which is far from certain. The
[581] girl has primarily chosen her sweetheart on the basis of an undefined mixture of
[582] sexual attraction and other propensities, whereas the girl's parents wish to limit the choice to those economically acceptable. Early the next morning the new

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Fig. 2.—Two Mataco girls electing partners among the younger men, who are performing their nightly chain-dance. Nowadays, especially the young men wear European rags. Flash-phot. Fock.

Formerly,

it was customary that two bands lived close to each other as, for example, the satnáy and sitóy, and consequently the girls from the satnáy preferred to marry men of the sitóy band, and girls of the sitóy men of the satnáy band. The two bands became so inter-married that "the whole thing was like one band", and the two chiefs were able to discuss questions of dispute. Here, therefore, developments had gone in the direction of forming temporary, loose marriage classes. The descent rules of the Mataco are patrilinear, so that, theoretically, exogamy should not impede cross-cousin marriage. In the meantime, there is no example of this practice, the nearest case being a single instance of a man's marriage to a sister's daughter. These cases must presumably be understood as expressing a man's wish to preserve his original locality. This is theoretically only possible in a matri-local exogamous patrilineal system by marrying one's sister's daughter.

It has been mentioned that a young man and girl who move in together always move to the house of the girl's family. Here they merely dwell temporarily, as a rule for about a year, so that the girl can give birth to her first child with the advice and assistance of her mother. The previous sexual relations of the girl are considered as trial marriages, but the birth of the child is regarded as the final test, whereafter she and the child's father are deemed to be married. She is then called *enatóka tahnayéy*. Should a girl prove with child during a trial marriage,

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family suspected that she had taken the fruit although she showed none of the usual symptoms. One of her sons asked the missionary for help. As soon as she realized she had been discovered, she jumped up and vehemently denied having taken poison. The son insisted that she had and that she was trying to deceive her family and the missionary. To make sure that she was in no danger, the missionary decided to give her an emetic. The old woman struggled violently, throwing off everyone who approached her; only after an hour's strenuous fight was she overcome and forced to take the purge. Of course her stomach contained large quantities of the poison, which she had timed very carefully to take effect early in the morning when everyone would be deep in sleep and, therefore, unaware of her condition. Had it not been for her son's persistence, she undoubtedly would have been found dead the next day. Her husband, who was devoted to her, appeared to be quite unconcerned and, had the matter been left with him, would have done nothing to save her.

In general, love affairs are said to be the main cause of these suicides. They are particularly frequent on the occasions of the nightly dances which are closely connected with the sexual life of the Matako and at such times may take epidemic proportions. A young man will take poison for some reason and soon after others follow suit. Asked why they try to kill themselves, they explain that they feel compelled to do so by some superior force. The fruit attracts them; the desire to eat it becomes an obsession. When they walk in the bush their attention becomes riveted upon the fruit, which they see everywhere, until the temptation becomes too strong and they eat it.

Young boys at school are quite likely to take poison when they have been scolded by their teacher. For this reason the missionaries must exercise particular care to avoid offense when the poisonous fruit is ripe and, consequently, especially dangerous.

Actually there is a great deal of ostentation in these suicides. It is likely that many who take poison, do not take a fatal dose. Those who really wish to die generally take the poison secretly and try to conceal the fact until it is too late to help them. The others, on the contrary, boast about what they have done and are willing, even eager to get medical treatment.

This mania also has its simulators and fakers. Certain individuals imitate all the clinical symptoms, —convulsions, foaming, etc.— without having tasted the deadly fruit. Here again the desire to show off, to be the center of attention is foremost. Every suicide attempt provokes turmoil in the village and everyone flocks to the house where

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762 the victim awaits death. It is said that some men take poison to blackmail a woman into complying with their wishes.

It has been noticed time and again that only young people eat sachasandia as a rule. Among the cases cited above there is only one of an elderly woman who attempted to take her life. In this connection, the question arises of whether suicides are more common among women than among men. No data on this point have been gathered, but it is the impression of the missionaries that suicide is equally common among men and women with perhaps a slight majority among women. The first problem raised by the frequency of these suicides is whether the suicides are caused by new conditions of life —by culture clash and lack, of adjustment to a new world— or whether they were equally frequent formerly when the native culture still functioned? Since no Matako group now lives in its earlier surroundings, the truth of the matter will be difficult to learn. If the problem is presented to the missionaries who are largely responsible for the disappearance of the Indian culture, they always insist that suicides were one of the worst manifestations of the culture before the Indians were saved. They point out, moreover, that the number of suicides was particularly high at the time when the missionaries began their work in the region, and they establish a close relation between suicide and dancing. One of the missionaries wrote to me: "In the old days when the Indians were still dancing, there used to be as many as a dozen attempted suicides in one day, resulting in my being up most of the night going from one to another. They were so many and so frequent, however, and it happened so long ago that I can remember none in detail". This evidence is confirmed by other missionaries who recall that the worst epidemics always occured in connection with the night dances which have a decidedly sexual character. At such times young married men who took part in the entertainments slept with girls, thus arousing the jealousy of their wives and the anger of their mothers-in law. If as a result one or two people committed suicide, others would follow their example.

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The link established between night dances and suicide was the main reason for the strict tabu against dancing which is now enforced in every mission. Indians have been made so aware of the evil of dancing that even little girls have been kept from their normal and charming jumping about. Missionaries, however, are not responsible for this measure; it has been self-imposed by the Indians.

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No cases of suicide are known among other tribes who live in the same region and under similar conditions. At any rate, I have never

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755 2. The medicine men had transformed their "image"
756 (spirit) into isti'n, a bird of prey, in order to go find the illness,
774 but as on this occasion the latter had proved particularly
825 malicious, this first attempt at conciliation had failed, and the men had to transform themselves into mɨsa', earth bees.

Ceremony for the Expulsion of Illness for the Benefit of One Person

(January 24, 1933)

755 In a small neighboring village a man was caught by naLi'le. Toward midnight he was dressed in red and white and
[292] seated in the center of the place for ceremonies; he was given two bells. Facing the sick man three sticks were stuck in the ground; one of them about two meters long was entirely covered with a dark cloth; the other two were 75 to 85 cm. long and had pieces of cloth attached to their upper part, which was topped with tufts of ostrich feathers. The two medicine men, dressed only in belts of ostrich feathers and holding iron rattles in their hands, were at the sick man's side. A little farther away were two assistants (probably members of the sick man's family) and three dancers; all were holding rattles.

[531] The medicine men sang and blew on the sick man, who shook his bells, while the dancers and the assistants stamped in
[535] place, /214/ making their rattles sound. The dancers next began to run around the group in the following manner: they went from left to right while turning their backs to the sticks; arriving level with the latter for the second time, they changed direction and continued in this fashion, alternately making two circles in each direction, while the assistants beat time with their feet and sang, making their rattles jingle, and the medicine men continued to sing and blow. The sick man had remained motionless during this time. After about ten circlings, the dancers

/214 cont./

755 went to rest, smoking and talking with the assistants, but the medicine men did not stop singing and shaking their rattles, the sick man continuing to remain motionless. The dancing was [533] [535] resumed after a quarter of an hour, accompanied this time by the rattles and singing of all the officiants and by the sick person's bells. The participants had a fairly joyful air. The ceremony ended everyone sat down and began to smoke. Then they carried away the sticks and began to take off the ornaments, first those of the medicine men, then those of the assistants and dancers, and lastly those of the sick man, who went quietly to his hut.

Note

[774] [776] naLi'le is a spirit who lives underground and steals the images of men. Sometimes those whom it has taken thus become medicine men.

Ceremony for the Expulsion of Illness
for the Benefit of One Person

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(March 20-24, 1933)

A woman who was seriously ill and very rich was treated by five great medicine men of the region.

[349] In the area around the house where she lived, about five square meters of ground were cleared, wooden posts were erected there, and a kind of tent was erected; one of the posts, of about six meters, was decorated with two large pieces of cloth and an old Argentinian flag. Around the tent were placed the objects demanded by the illness or appropriate to please it: a spread-out mosquito net, a poncho on a weaving loom, an old suitcase, some cloths of loud colors, a saddle, a military coat,

/214 cont./

755 554 a storm lamp, a lance, and a gun. A little farther away fires were prepared for cooking foods destined for the illness and a bucket of water for the dancers. The sick woman was seated in the middle of the tent on a bale of hay and some old cloths, dressed in her best clothes and covered with ritual ornaments. [292] [301] [302] The five medicine men were also adorned; they were wearing feather belts, rattles, colonial helmets, /215/ and other precious objects; the entire lower part of their faces was daubed with black. There were also about 20 dancers, dressed up in 755 554 feathers, red belts decorated with shells, rattles, caps, red cloths, whistles, and old broken watches; about 10 old women 535 were running around with pieces of cloth in their hands, and one of them with an umbrella. Everyone, including the sick woman, danced and sang; sometimes the medicine men and the sick woman stopped, and the medicine men blew on her; then the dance was resumed. After some time the chief medicine man blew on his bone flute and the dance stopped outright. The sick woman danced by herself, slowly lifting one foot, then the other, three or four centimeters above the ground, and staying in one place; during this time, two medicine men were shaking their rattles, a man was tapping in his hands, laughing, and another was shaking two flat, tin bottles — in which powder is sold in the interior of Argentina — filled with seeds; this lasted about ten minutes, and then the medicine 755 554 men joined in the dance, but only for a short time. After a stop two of them approached the sick woman and began to take off her things; during this time a medicine man was shaking his rattles along the woman's body, beginning with the head. Slowly all the ornaments were taken off, the assistants tapped the ground on the spot where they had fallen, then, running, they went to throw them outside; having gathered them together they shook them several times, and then carefully arranged them. The sick woman was seated in the middle of the tent and given something to drink. The ceremony was interrupted and then continued.

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755 The whole ceremony lasted from March 20 to March 24,
554 every day from 8 A.M. to 2 P.M. and from 8 to 10 P.M.
Each day at the end of the ceremony a shot was fired to frighten the illness.

Ceremony for the Expulsion of Illness for the Benefit of One Person

(March 26, 1933)

755 On March 26 another woman who had the same symptoms of illness as the preceding one was treated in the following manner: the site already described was used, but the flag was replaced by a large piece of red cloth with blue flowers, and a thick tuft of ostrich feathers was attached to the top of the post. The staff was decorated with ritual belts. Offerings of the same type as those for the preceding ceremony were placed on the crossbars which separated the tent from the village.
755 During the entire ceremony the sick woman remained seated
535 /216/ on a bale of hay in the center of the tent; right next to her were four of the great medicine men, a little farther away about ten young dancers, and then a final circle of six or seven women. All the officiants, adorned as usual with feathers, ritual belts, and little bells, danced and sang. A passage was
[123] contrived in the separating crossbars, and, as I insisted on it, a medicine man came to tell me that this opening was intended to let the illness out; I asked him if my presence would prevent it from going out; he told me no, but that I was running the risk that it would enter me at the moment it left the body of the sick woman.

The dance was halted at a sign from the chief medicine man, and two men, taking a poncho, striped red and white, by its ends, began to dance, jumping sideways, legs open; then

/216 cont./

755 they approached the sick woman and passed the poncho over her
536 head; next they ran to the exit and shook it. They repeated this maneuver several times, then completely enveloped the woman in the poncho, and a medicine man began to rub her through the cloth. Everyone was singing but some were not dancing. After some time the poncho was taken off, carried at a running pace to the exit, and thrown outside. The dance was resumed; an assistant threw some water on the ground, and the chief medicine man then stopped the dance again. He sat next to the sick woman, covering himself completely with a large black blanket, and began to speak with the illness; during this time the man who was watering the ground carried up a bucket of water and, with the help of a medicine man, washed the face, head, and body of the sick woman, who was turned with her feet toward the passage made in the crossbars, and a path was traced with water from her feet to the passage. The chief medicine man got up and the dance was resumed with renewed
[302] ardor. During this dance the assistant moistened the shoulders of the male dancers, while an old man painted the faces of the women red, giving them two circles on the cheek bones and a streak along the nose. At the same time one medicine man blew on the sick woman and another covered her face with a red cloth. At the end of a certain time the sick woman lay down, the dance continued, taking on a threatening character, and then suddenly the people appeared satisfied, having undoubtedly obtained a momentary success. The ceremony stopped and was resumed after an hour.

Note

[164] [132] According to the medicine men with whom I had a chance to talk about these two sick women, they were suffering from "sickness in the chest," /217/ easily explicable by a sharp atmospheric drop of almost 25° in 24 hours.